

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OES-07 FEA-01 ACDA-07 CIAE-00
INR-07 IO-13 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 EB-07 NRC-05
DODE-00 ERDA-05 PM-04 H-01 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 /103 W
-----091932Z 094904 /43

R 091151Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 521
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

C O N F I D E N T I A L STOCKHOLM 1965

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, TECH, SW
SUBJECT: NUCLEAR ENERGY DIFFERENCES PLAGUE GOVERNMENT

REF: STOCKHOLM 1340

1. THE FAILURE TO AGREE ON A SINGLE NUCLEAR ENERGY POLICY (REFTEL) CONTINUES TO PLAGUE SWEDEN'S FIRST NON-SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT IN FOUR DECADES. INTRA-COALITION DIFFERENCES ON THE NUCLEAR ISSUES ARE BELIEVED TO BE A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO THE GOVERNING PARTIES' CONTINUING DECLINE IN RECENT POLITICAL PREFERENCE POLLS AND REPRESENT THE MOST SERIOUS THREAT TO THE REGIME'S LONGEVITY. THESE DIFFERENCES WERE NOT REDUCED SIGNIFICANTLY BY THE ANNOUNCEMENT ON MAY 3 BY MINISTER OF ENERGY OLOF JOHANSSON THAT STATE CREDIT GUARANTEES WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR THE CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF THE FORSMARK 3 NUCLEAR ENERGY PLANT (THE 11TH PLANT IN THE SWEDISH SERIES, BUT NOT FOR THE OSKARSHAMN 3 PLANT (THE 12TH). WITHOUT SUCH GUARANTEES, IT IS GENERALLY FELT THAT THE EXTENSIVE CAPITAL REQUIREMENTS
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NEEDED FOR REACH PLANT WILL NOT BE FORTHCOMING.

2. UNTIL JOHANSSON'S ANNOUNCEMENT, IT HAD GENERALLY BEEN UNDERSTOOD THAT THE CENTER PARTY, OF WHICH THE MINISTER IS A LEADING MEMBER, WOULD STRONGLY OPPOSE GOVERNMENT GUARANTEES FOR EITHER PLANT. IT WAS KNOWN THAT THE LIBERAL PARTY WAS SUPPORTING A GUARANTEE FOR

THE 11TH PLANT, WHILE THE MODERATE PARTY HAS CONSISTENTLY ADVOCATED FULL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR 12 OR EVEN 13 PLANTS. JOHANSSON REJECTED SUGGESTIONS THAT HIS ANNOUNCEMENT REPRESENTED A COMPROMISE, STATING THAT HIS PROPOSAL HAD BEEN ACCEPTED "ON EVERY ESSENTIAL POINT." WITH REGARD TO FORSMARK 3 (THE 11TH PLANT), JOHANSSON SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD LEFT THE DOOR OPEN TO ANY SOLUTION BETWEEN "MINIMAL PROGRESS" AND A TOTAL STOP. THE NEXT STEP, HE ADDED, WAS NEGOTIATION WITH THE OWNERS OF FORSMARK 3, AFTER WHICH THE GOVERNMENT WILL MAKE A NEW DECISION, POSSIBLY BEFORE JULY 1.

3. THE REACTION TO THE GOVERNMENT'S ANNOUNCEMENT LARGELY REFLECTED PARTY POSITIONS ON THE ISSUE. THERE WAS SOME SIMILARITY IN ONE RESPECT, HOWEVER--THE POWER COMPANIES INVOLVED, THE PRO-NUCLEAR PRESS, AND THE OPPOSITION SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AGREED THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW FROM JOHANSSON'S STATEMENT WHAT THE GOVERNMENT'S TRUE INTENTIONS WERE WITH RESPECT TO THE TWO PROJECTED PLANTS. THE OSKARSHAMN POWER GROUP, WHOSE PROJECT MUST NOW BE CONSIDERED IN GREAT JEOPARDY, QUITE EXPECTEDLY DEMANDED CLARIFICATION, INSISTING THERE WAS NO SUCH THING AS "MINIMAL PROGRESS" IN NUCLEAR PLANT CONSTRUCTION. SDP LEADER PALME ACCUSED THE GOVERNMENT OF ENGAGING IN A CROOKED POLITICAL GAMBLE ON NUCLEAR ENERGY. PALME ADDED THAT FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF SAFETY, IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN THE TWO PLANTS SINCE THEY ARE IDENTICAL IN DESIGNED SAFEGUARDS AND PURPOSE. PALME DECRIED THE EFFECTS OF A TOTAL STOP ON EITHER

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PLANT IN TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT AND FUTURE POWER REQUIREMENTS.

4. COMMENT: IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE NUCLEAR ISSUE CONTINUES TO BE THE MOST TROUBLESOME FOR THE COALITION. ACCORDING TO VARIOUS EMBASSY CONTACTS, JOHANSSON'S ANNOUNCEMENT HAD THE PURPOSE OF DELAYING AN OFFICIAL DECISION ON THE FINAL SHAPE OF THE SWEDISH NUCLEAR COMPLEX. IT IS MOST UNLIKELY THAT ANY OF THE GOVERNMENT PARTIES WILL CHANGE ITS PROFILE ON THIS QUESTION BEFORE THE RIKSDAG ENERGY DEBATE NOW SCHEDULED FOR THE FALL OF 1978. WE ARE INFORMED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOW POSTPONE THE LOADING OF TWO OTHER POWER PLANTS (RINGHALS 3 AND FORSMARK 1) WHOSE CONSTRUCTION WILL BE COMPLETED THIS YEAR. IN OTHER WORDS, THE CENTER PARTY'S STRATEGY CLEARLY SEEMS TO BE TO EFFECT A SLOWDOWN IF NOT A HALT IN FURTHER NUCLEAR EXPANSION UNTIL THE RIKSDAG DEBATE. IF THE THREE PARTIES ARE UNABLE TO AGREE AT THAT TIME ON A NUCLEAR PROGRAM FOR SWEDEN, A SERIOUS GOVERNMENT CRISIS WILL MOST CERTAINLY ARISE AND COULD EASILY

BRING DOWN THE FALLDIN REGIME.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, POLICIES, NUCLEAR ENERGY, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, PROGRAMS (PROJECTS)
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 09-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STOCKH01965
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770163-0073
Format: TEL
From: STOCKHOLM
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770577/aaaacoox.tel
Line Count: 118
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: cb67c397-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 STOCKHOLM 1340
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2591852
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NUCLEAR ENERGY DIFFERENCES PLAGUE GOVERNMENT
TAGS: PINT, TECH, SW
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/cb67c397-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009